



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

**Wildlife
Services**

FY 2004

WILDLIFE SERVICES—WASHINGTON

Contact Information:

For Assistance:

Roger Woodruff, Washington and Alaska Wildlife Services State

Director

720 O'Leary Street NW

Olympia, WA 98502

Phone: (360) 753-9884 FAX: (360) 753-9466

Toll-Free Number: 1-866-4USDAWS

E-mail: roger.a.woodruff@aphis.usda.gov

Web site: www.aphis.usda.gov/ws

For Research:

Field Station Leader

9730-B Lathrop Industrial Drive SW

Olympia, WA 98512

Phone: (360) 956-3793 FAX: (360) 534-9755

E-mail: dale.l.nolte@aphis.usda.gov

USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Washington

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Washington Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Washington is a diverse mix of urban and suburban settings, agricultural lands, forests, coastline, and desert environments. This ecological and geographic diversity gives the State a remarkable variety of wildlife species. With nearly 6 million residents, and a population growth that is higher than the national average, human conflicts with wildlife are expected to increase.

WS biologists and field technicians help Washington's fruit and livestock producers reduce losses from birds and predators. WS protects aircraft and the lives of pilots and air passengers from dangerous wildlife collisions with aircraft. The program also addresses serious bird and mammal damage to the State's transportation infrastructure, municipal properties, and public and private buildings. In addition, WS helps protect public health and safety, crops, and natural resources, including threatened and endangered species like the Columbian white-tailed deer, salmon, and steelhead.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Evaluating waterfowl as disease, parasite, and noxious weed reservoirs
- Managing predators to protect livestock and wildlife
- Developing wildlife-deterrent grasses and stormwater detention ponds
- Improving rodent damage management methods

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Washington:

- Protecting passengers and aircraft from collisions with wildlife
- Protecting threatened and endangered species and other sensitive wildlife from predators
- Protecting livestock and poultry from wildlife predators
- Protecting roads, irrigation ditches, timber, conservation sites, and property from damage by beaver and nutria
- Protecting Washington's transportation infrastructure, crops, dairies, feedlots, and public and private structures from bird damage



cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—Experts estimate that wildlife strikes with aircraft cost the U.S. civil aviation industry roughly \$500 million annually as a result of damage to equipment and other associated costs. In Washington, 136 public-use civilian airports, 318 private airports, and three major military air bases conduct well over 1 million aircraft operations each year. At the same time, populations of gulls and geese, which pose the greatest threat to airports, are at record levels. These birds are of particular concern at several of the State's busiest airports.

The WS program is recognized nationally and internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) continually conducts research to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports, develop management tools to reduce these hazards, and provide airport personnel with information to control or prevent these hazards. NWRC personnel also maintain the National Wildlife Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species that pose the greatest concern to aviation.

Applying this scientific expertise, WS provides assistance to more than 40 civilian and military airports each year. On-site evaluations, as well as comprehensive Wildlife Hazard Assessments, are completed before direct management work is done.

Protecting Human Health and Safety, Property, and Crops—Several bird and mammal species cause extensive damage to property and crops and threaten the health and safety of Washington residents.

Bridges, buildings, and other structures in Washington sustain millions of dollars in damage from fecal contamination and the nesting activities of starlings, pigeons, and gulls. Bird droppings are corrosive to paints, metals, and other building materials, and pose health hazards to workers and the public. The cost of cleaning and repainting a single bridge spanning the Columbia River can exceed \$1 million. Starlings, pigeons, and gulls also cause more than \$6 million in damage to Washington's fruit industry annually. Migrating Canada geese are another bird species that cause substantial damage to crops. Washington is also home to a rapidly expanding population of urban Canada geese that are year-round residents in area cities. Populations of urban geese have caused millions of dollars in damages to city parks and private properties over the past several years. Disease concerns have even led to the closure of several public swimming beaches. Beaver populations in Washington have been increasing, resulting in flooding of homes, personal property, and timberlands; washing out roads; dropping trees along creeks; and burrowing in irrigation ditches. Nutria, an invasive rodent that was introduced into western Washington, compromise irrigation structures with their burrowing and they damage wetlands by consuming the vegetation.

For decades, NWRC has been the leader in investigating and developing methods for managing bird damage to agriculture and property, and threats to public health and safety. NWRC scientists have been responsible for the development of many of the management tools in use today, including repellants, capture techniques, and ecologically safe toxicants.

Each year, Washington WS provides preservation advice and direct assistance for urban Canada goose problems at locations throughout the Puget Sound area. WS also provides assistance with gull, pigeon, and starling problems throughout the State.

Protecting Threatened and Endangered Species—Washington WS protects threatened and endangered species from wildlife and fish predation and damage. The State is home to six runs of threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead. Nine more runs are listed as proposed or candidate species by the National Marine Fisheries Service due to declining populations.

NWRC scientists have researched ways to reduce or relocate gull colonies that threaten downstream migrant salmon and steelhead. Research on egg oiling techniques and sight barriers have provided new management alternatives for resolving gull problems. Other innovations include the development of overhead wiring systems that exclude gulls and other fish-eating birds from dam areas where the worst predation occurs. In cooperation with Federal and State agencies, WS has installed overhead wire grids at all Washington dams along the Columbia/Snake River system where downstream migrant salmon and steelhead smolt pass.

In addition to protecting threatened and endangered fish species, WS has helped to protect the endangered Columbian white-tailed deer and the

pygmy rabbit from coyote depredation and the program stands ready to provide future assistance as needed.

Looking to the Future

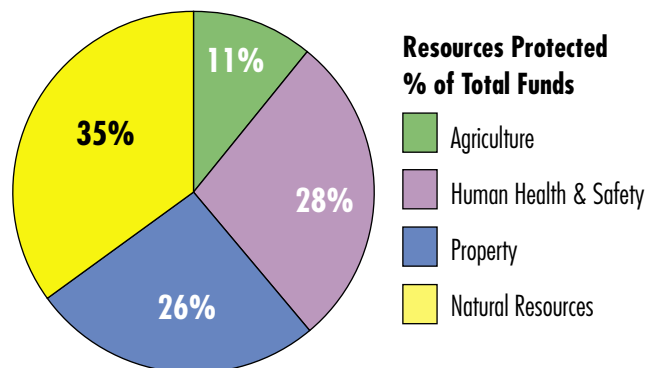
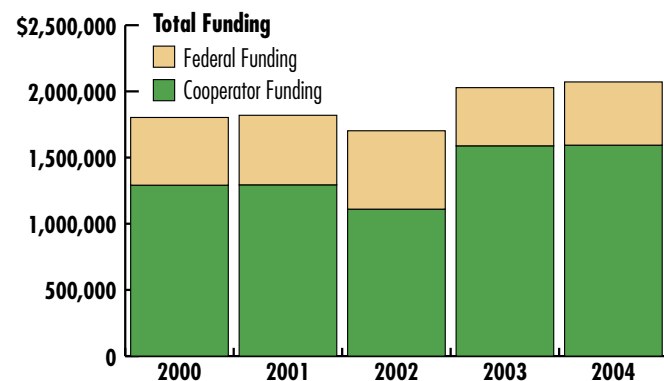
For Washington wildlife managers, public safety has become a growing concern. This is particularly true at airports. Increased travel through Washington airports, coupled with the population growth of many bird species, have created a greater need for airport managers to deal with threats posed by wildlife.

Urban Canada geese are another threat to public safety and property in Washington. WS is increasingly being asked to manage urban Canada goose populations that cause property damage and health concerns. While community leaders are turning to WS for assistance, the program is challenged by limited resources.

A third concern in Washington is increasing predator and aquatic mammal damage to livestock, agricultural, and forestry resources. State and private entities are turning to WS for much needed assistance in managing damage caused by coyotes, beavers, nutria, and other predators. Current regulations, however, restrict trapping in Washington, making it more difficult and expensive for WS to help. These restrictions, in combination with WS' limited resources, could lead to unresolved problems with predators throughout the State.

Washington Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.



Major Cooperators

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Puget Sound Naval Shipyard
- SeaTac, Port Angeles, and Spokane International Airports
- Seattle Waterfowl Management Committee (14 cities, counties, and municipal entities)
- Everett Naval Air Station
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- County public utility districts, governments, and airports
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Washington State Department of Parks and Recreation
- Washington State Department of Transportation